MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • APRIL 2000

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
Pauline V. Walters

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Susan Cee Wineberg

VICE PRESIDENT
Virginia Hills

TREASURER
Patricia W. Creal

RECORDING SECRETARY
Judith Chrisman

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
Harriet A. Birch

DIRECTORS

Rosemarion Blake
Nancy Bryk
Lucille Fisher
Peggy Haines
Pamela Newhouse
Karen K. O'Neal
Peter Rocco
Karen Simpson
Jay Snyder
Patricia E. Thompson
Esther Warzynski

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

Ralph P. Beebe
Julie C. Goodridge

INFORMATION

Published September-May, except December, January.

500 N. Main Street at Beakes Street
Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106-3336

Phone: 734.662.9092
Fax 734.663.0039
Email: WCHS MoMS@aol.com
Web Site: www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/society/socwashtenaw.htm

LOUIS WM. DOLL, PH.D.

Frances Caspary, Soprano

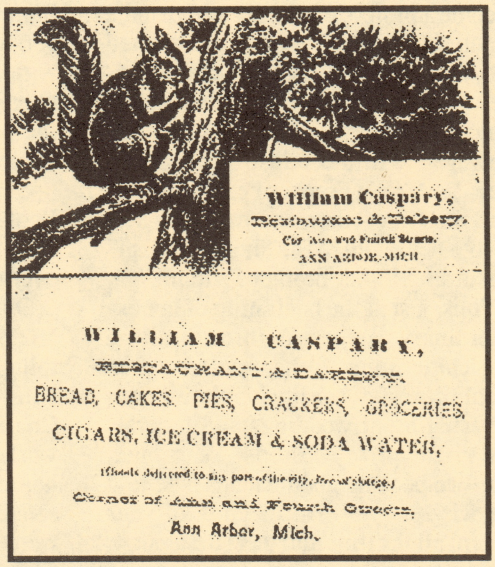
William P. Caspary was born in the Rhine region of Germany in 1843 and came to the United States at an early age. He settled in Ann Arbor, Michigan and opened a bakery at the NW corner of Fourth and Ann that was well patronized. He married Catherine C. Mueth in 1864. Six children were born to the marriage. Two died young and four lived to adulthood. There were Catherine R., William P., Jr., Cecilia, and Frances. The latter was born in 1879 and is of the most interest to us.

I do not know when it was discovered, but Frances had a beautiful and extraordinary soprano voice. I don't know what prompted the family to develop it, but Germans are noted lovers of music and singing, and the Casparys must have recognized this talent and decided to develop it. Consequently, Mrs. Caspary sent Frances to a music conservatory in Pittsburgh. She later enrolled in the School of Music at the University of Michigan. As this was unfolding, Mr. Caspary opened another bakery in Chelsea while his wife ran the Ann Arbor shop.

In 1896, Mrs. Caspary purchased the property at 424 N. State Street (the SE corner of State and Kingsley, kitty korner from St. Thomas Church) where the family lived for years. Mr. Caspary Sr. stayed in Chelsea. This was a good arrangement since it was known that the marriage was not a happy one and frequent quarrels were the norm. The only time they saw each other was when Mrs. Caspary went to Chelsea to get money to run the Ann Arbor household. These two bakeries supported two households as well as an expensive musical education at a university!

Frances graduated from the UM Music School in 1905 with high honors and embarked on an extensive singing career. Beakes' 1906 *Past and Present of Washtenaw County* noted that Miss Frances Caspari (sic) has "a reputation in musical circles so wide that she needs no special introduction" and

Continued on page 2.



Newspaper advertisement for Wm. Caspary's bakery in Chelsea, 1889

African American Sites Tour Inaugarated

The African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County announces the opening of its Historical Heritage Sites Tour. You can walk in the footsteps of African-American history makers in both Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor. Some of the 9 sites in Ann Arbor include the Kayser Block on N. Fourth Ave in Ann Arbor, the Dunbar Center and the St. Vincent DePaul Building, former home of the abolitionist newspaper "Signal of Liberty." You can tour the Ypsilanti Association of Women's Clubs and see a plaque dedicated to Elijah McCoy, two of 5 sites in Ypsilanti.

On **Sunday April 9**, from 4-6 PM, they will kick-off the opening of the tour at the Ypsilanti Marriott at Eagle Crest, 1275 Huron St.. Call 734-769-1630 for more information. Refreshments will be served following a short program.

LOUIS WM. DOLL, PH.D.

Frances Caspary, Soprano (cont.)

that she had been a soloist at the May Festival for three years. Lela Duff in Ann Arbor Yesterdays noted that her brother William Caspari (sic) Jr. had become a professional tenor and that the beauty of Frances' voice had attracted the notice of Madame Schumann-Heink. By 1913 she was giving solo concerts in New York concert halls. However, "In the midst of honors in New York City Frances became homesick for Ann Arbor and came back to devote her talent to St. Thomas parish" (according to her brother William.)

Thus, just at the beginning of her extraordinary career, she threw it all up and came home to her mother. She spent the rest of her life in relative poverty singing at weddings and funerals and giving private lessons. Years later, after we became good friends, she told me why. "If you had to think of your weight all the time and diet strenuously, and have to be continually resisting the nasty advances of nasty men, it wasn't worth it." Frances liked to eat and to indulge herself.

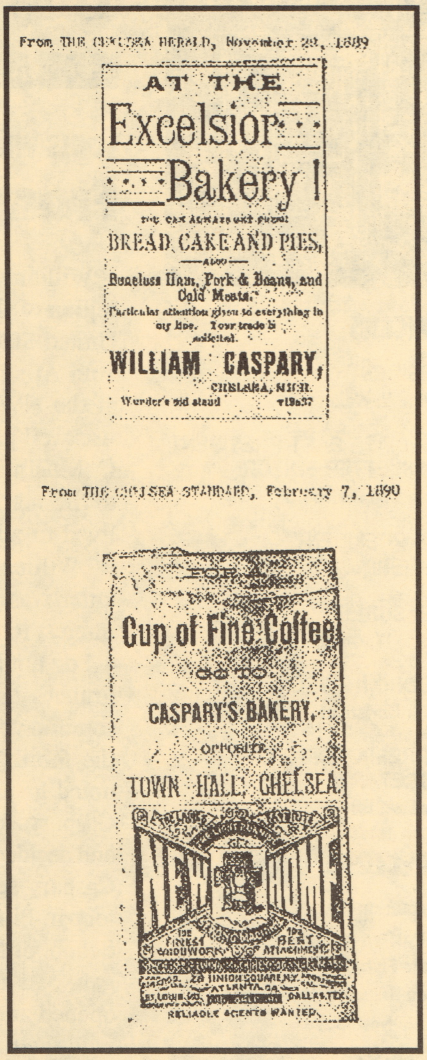
My family bought the property at 411 N. State and we moved there from Chelsea on July 5, 1922. We soon discovered the Caspary family living close by and that Frances had a lovely soprano voice. In the late spring of 1923, Rev. John Richard Command became pastor of St. Thomas Church. He had a very good singing voice himself and began vespers in the church in which he sang the cantor's part alternating with the choir. I enjoyed this very much and attended when I could. Attendance was poor, but Father Command continued it during his whole pastorate. He loved ceremony and introduced many new features to enhance the Mass. He decided right away to establish a boys choir and for that purpose hired Frances to direct it and Mr. Kempf of the well-known Ann Arbor family to be pianist and organist. Recruits came from St. Thomas School and consisted of boys known to have a good singing voice. I was among them. We practiced in the Caspary's front parlor and began at the time school started that fall aiming at Midnight Mass for our first public performance.

Sometime during the fall we had a picnic at the Caspary summer cottage on Whitmore Lake. Two Basso boys, sons of the proprietor of the Basso Fruit Store on Detroit Street, were also members of the choir. Their mother came with a huge bunch of bananas singing "Yes, we have no bananas" which was the popular hit song of the year and definitely dates the picnic. We practiced weekly for Christmas. That is how I got to know Frances. As we lived so close to one another she often called me over to do errands for her.

On the afternoon of December 24, 1923, Frances called to tell me something. She had gone earlier that afternoon to the rectory to talk to Father Command. She told him that she had worked hard with the boys, had had her home disrupted by the practice, was dissatisfied with the $25.00 a week and wanted a raise. According to her story, Father Command said, "you're not worth it." "Then I quit right now," she answered and left in anger. She had called to tell me that the choir would have to sing Midnight Mass with only the direction of Mr. Kempf who would be in the choir loft. We got through it somehow but it was our first, last, and only performance. Wasted was the training, all the money paid for salaries and for the beautiful red cassocks with their gold fringed white capes.

Frances continued her unrestrained eating and eventually reached over 300 pounds. Her ankles had difficulty carrying such a weight and she eventually became completely housebound. She eventually was unable to walk and had to give up singing at weddings and funerals or on other occasions. The bond between us continued, however, right through my college days until I went into the service. I was invited to the cottage to meet distinguished friends of the Casparys and enjoyed talking to Professor Diekhoff who had a cottage next door. She was one of the many memorable people I knew in the Old Fourth Ward.

Professor Doll has sent us several manuscripts and we hope to publish them in future issues. He now lives in Bay City, Michigan.



Advertising cards from the mid-1880s for the Caspary Bakery

Are You Electronic?

Members who wish to receive news of our activities via e-mail, both for their own use and to pass on to friends and associates at work, should send their e-mail address to President Pauline Walters at Popowalt@aol.com. We can send you information on upcoming events, meetings and exhibits.

THE STORY OF THE ARGUS CAMERA COMPANY • JOE O'NEAL

Radios In The Winter • Cameras In The Summer

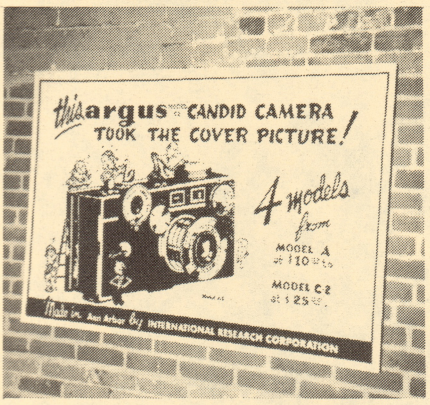


Photo by Susan Wineberg

Blow-up of ad for Argus Cameras, ca. 1940.

The lobby of the former Argus factory at Fourth and William Streets in Ann Arbor, now the headquarters of O'Neal Construction, was packed with a standing-room only crowd of more than 100 to view and hear about Joe O'Neal's Argus Camera collection. Many former employees of Argus Camera were on hand to share memories and photographs.

Joe was introduced by President Pauline Walters, who noted that he was a UM graduate who first became acquainted with Ann Arbor when he came to paint a huge "O" at the football stadium for Ohio State. After taking photographs of the Law School with his Argus C-3 camera, he applied, was admitted and received a Law Degree c. 1955. Joe, however, has never practiced law. He went into Civil Engineering, and taught contracts and specifications to civil engineering students. This is how he met his wife and former WCHS President Karen Koykka O'Neal in 1960 at the UM's Camp Davis in the Teton Mountains. He organized his company, O'Neal Construction, in 1965 and was first located in the Benz Building on S. Fourth Ave. He and Bill Martin restored and remodeled the former Argus factory in 1986.

Joe began his talk by loading an Argus C-3 with a new roll of ASA 400 film. It was the same camera he used in Wyoming when he met Karen, and which he bought in 1957 from Purchase Camera in Ann Arbor for $57.00. That was a lot of money in 1957. Leicas cost about $300 in 1957 so this was a bargain. But the flash never worked! He is now going to use it for the first time in 25 years—unrehearsed. Joe does not want anyone to say that he did not focus on his audience! (Photos were snapped of the audience). Joe commented that nothing is automatic on this camera, unlike point and shoot cameras of today, which he also demonstrated.

"In 1970, in a book entitled **Glass, Brass and Chrome,** the authors stated 'it is quite likely that three decades from now the 35mm camera of today will be regarded as a quaint antique of a vanished era… but we would be the last to say that to the thousands of contented C-3 owners still clunking around."

Joe gave a brief synopsis of the history of the building we were in. "The original building was constructed in 1866 on William Street and in 1868 John Keck bought it and began the John Keck Furniture Company with his brothers Frederick, George and Martin. In 1879, the company was re-organized by Keck as a stock company and the four-story building facing Fourth Street added on. There was a big steam engine at the corner of the building to power both buildings. In 1884 it was reorganized as the Michigan Furniture Company, which specialized in bedroom "suites" (pronounced suits). It was one of 13 companies producing this furniture for Sears Roebuck & Co.

This building has had a tremendous impact on the world, producing everything from beds to cameras to helping to win World War II. We have a dresser in another office with a serpentine front, which we purchased from Novella Bolen, (an antiques dealer who lives nearby on Second Street) which was manufactured in this building. A couple of weeks ago Novella gave us a beautiful saw that was used in the building to manufacture furniture. It belonged to Paul Snauble who was the general manager of Michigan Furniture.

We know the sequence in which the various portions of this building were built by the style of the column capitals. In the oldest section the columns have wood capitals. Later the columns were capped with heavy cast steel column capitals. In the middle building they used rolled steel plate capitals.

Recently Don Keck, a descendant of John Keck, visited us. He was employed at the New York Corning Glass Works and was a pioneer in the development of low loss affordable fiber. That fiber gave birth to fiber optics. So Mr. Keck had the genes that would someday connect this building to the University system and therefore enable us to have the University as a major tenant. I think that is a unique twist of history.

In 1929, the furniture business was down. All of the hardwood in Michigan had been used up and the industry had moved to Western Michigan. Meanwhile, on Wildt Street in Ann Arbor, a man named Charles Verschoor was busy building Arborphone Radios. His radios were quite successful since they were small and could be carried around. In fact, you could get a 10 or 12 tube radio, but those in the know used only 5 and used the rest as spares. Verschoor's factory burned in 1931 and that same year he moved into this building. His various companies occupied this building from 1931

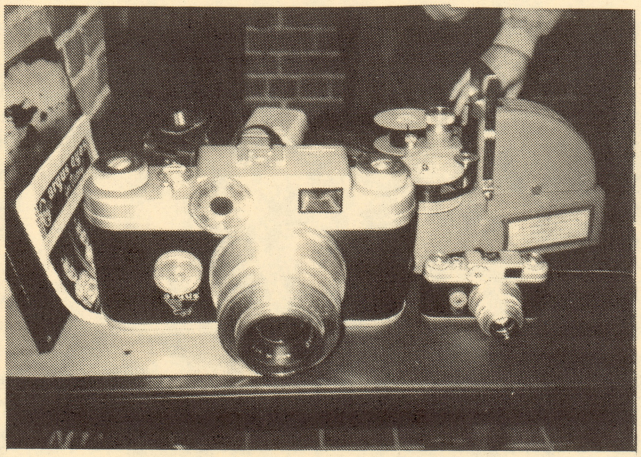


Photo by Susan Wineberg

A large model C-4 and an actual C-4 manufactured between 1950-57

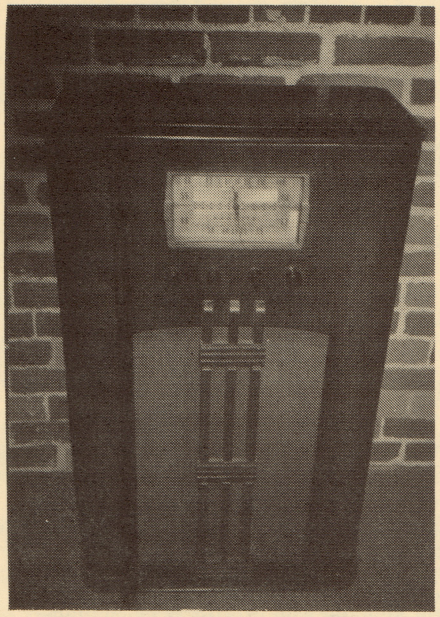


Photo by Susan Wineberg

A floor model Kadette Radio, c. 1935

to 1963. From 1963-1983 it was owned and occupied by the University of Michigan and was home to various research institutes including the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, the Urban Health Project, and the famous Amphibian Lab which bred crickets to feed its frogs.

In 1986, C-3 Partners (O'Neal Construction and Bill Martin) hired the local preservation architecture firm of Quinn/Evans to restore and renovate this historic factory buildings for use as an office building. The partners had purchased the building in 1983 hoping to turn it into housing but this didn't work and the office concept was pursued. It occurred to me today while coming here that we are still busy every day writing more history for this property. Our current tenants include Beckett and Raeder, Inc. (nationally known land planners), the University's computer management system, Great Lakes Colleges Association and the Great Lakes Consortium. As the home of UM's ITD, we can claim that parts of the ATM machine and wireless computing was born in this building. We can even claim that our building was instrumental in the development of the Internet!

Upstairs you can tour the Museum that began with a purchase from Don Wallace of his Argus Camera Collection. Notice the cases are scratched. We left them this way to show that they have been used for a long time (since 1900). They are also interesting because the corners are dovetailed with a unique figure-8.

"Let's go back to 1931, to the fire on Wildt Street. The Depression was on but people were in love with radios. Mr. Verschoor had an idea to build radios with plastic molded bodies. He was joined by Bill Brown, later a 12 year mayor of Ann Arbor, who got together a number of investors who saw the potential in small, portable radios. International Radio Corporation was formed in 1931. It built the first AC/DC radios, known as the Kadette, which could be put into cars or trains or on your mantel. By 1933 the company was booming and set an example of recovery for the entire country.

A unique thing about the radio at that time, however, was that it was seasonal. You did not listen to them in the summer—you listened to them in the winter. Mr. Verschoor had been to Europe and had been introduced to the Leica Camera, and had a brainstorm: radios in the winter, cameras in the summer. He brought back an engineer, Gustave Fassin, and challenged him to design an affordable camera. Verschoor had a dream and pursued it but he was also very lucky. In 1934, the same year Fassin started to work, Kodak invented film in a can (referred to as 35mm daylight loading cartridge film). This would be a godsend for the new camera.

From 1934-36, Fassin worked on developing the first A Camera (ours is

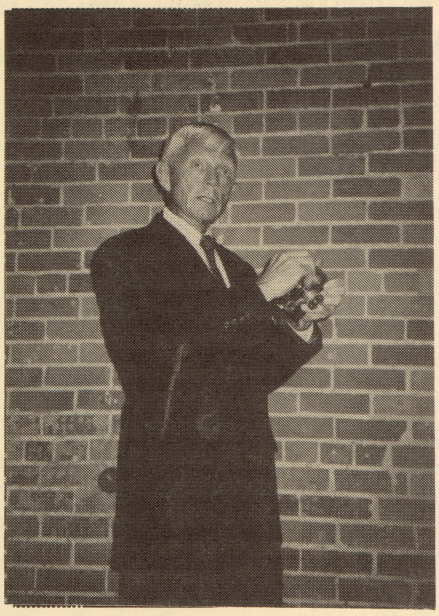


Photo by Susan Wineberg

Joe O'Neal demonstrates a C-3 in action.

Model # 1978) and the first ones sold for $9.95 (later $12.50). In the first few weeks, they sold 30,000 cameras! It had two settings, a lens and shutter by Ilex and had to be set manually. The body was bakelite and had rounded corners in the streamline style of the era. It had metal parts, a collapsible lens and came in black, tan or gray (there is one of each in the museum). There were many variations in the A line, too many for me to go into. However, in 1937 the tail began to wag the dog. Cameras were outselling radios. So, Mr. Verschoor focused on the camera and sold the radio patents to RCA.

In 1938, Fassin was given another assignment, and this resulted in the Model C. By the end of 1938, a wheel had been added so that when you turned the focus you automatically turned the lens. In 1939, they added the flash (which was always problematic). It had a split image focus and you had to figure out the settings yourself, based on the speed of the film and your knowledge of light conditions. It had a Bausch and Lomb lens and was heavy, weighing 24 ounces. This was the famous 'brick,' the Model T of cameras. And it is the only non-Kodak camera you will find in the Eastman Kodak Museum in Rochester, New York because of what it did with 35mm film.

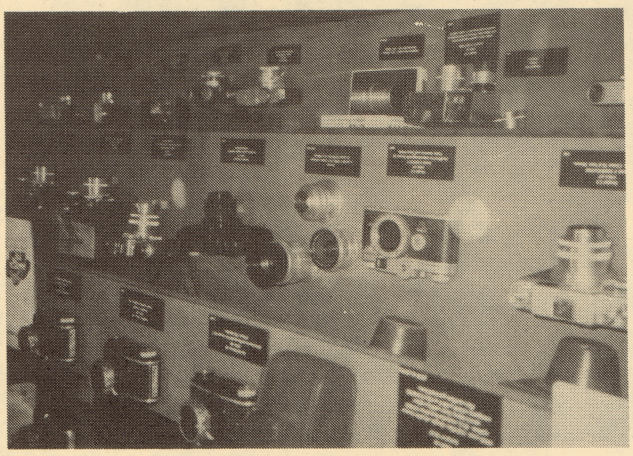


Photo by Susan Wineberg

A view of the Argus Camera Collection in the Museum Area of the old factory.

Between 1938 and 1966, almost 3,000,000 C-3s were sold. For comparison, Argus' assets were around $10 million, while Kodak's were around $500 million. Between 1938 and 1940, there were 44,000 cameras owned by the public and of that number 38,000 were made in this building by Argus. What an impact it had. This camera led, no question about it, to cameras like the point and shoot of today. The company undertook a poll to find out why the camera was such a success. They learned that its scientific appearance and the fact that it produced sharp beautiful color pictures captivated the public: "I love my C-3," they said. "It's built to take care of itself."

Joe has tried to understand why he too is so captivated by this camera. He noted his strong emotional attachment to his C-3, something he doesn't feel for any of his other cameras. He decided it's because "we've had a lot of fun together. We photographed from the tops of mountains and the bottom of mountains. We photographed our children and have created one massive amount of slides!"

In 1938, Mr. Verschoor was removed from management. Robert D. Howse was elected president and the company was renamed Argus Industries. In 1939, they purchased Graf Optical, a Chicago lens maker, and this was to be extremely important for the war years which immediately followed.

All of us who worked here during those war years can be very proud of what this building did between 1940 and 1945. Because they had this lens-making capability and because the government gave them a lot of money to perfect automating the manufacture of lenses, it became the epicenter of lenses for World War II. Somewhere, and I'd love to find it, there's a letter from Dwight Eisenhower complimenting Argus for their accomplishments, especially regarding the war in northern Africa in defeating Rommel's troops.

In 1942, Argus built the building across the street with the rounded corners. Here they built lenses for such things as a tank periscope. Once they were asked to build 1,000 binoculars in two months. From order, design, material acquisition, manufacture, they did it and delivered it. The plant grew and grew and guards patrolled the buildings day and night. I regret now that I didn't tape a lady who lived across the street talking about the guards.

In 1944, the company was renamed Argus, Inc. Argus Inc. did two totally different things during this era to win the war and I'm the only one who looks at the second thing as having any meaning. First, they produced hundreds of thousands of lenses that went out so the war could be won. And second, a young soldier named Tony Vacarro purchased one of the cameras like mine. Tony came to my office one day and I thought he was a salesman. But Tony's story unfolded: he went to war as a young man with an M-1 rifle on one shoulder and an Argus C-3 on the other. He took over 3,000 photographs from the front line, many taken of his comrades being blown to pieces. Tony got his supplies from bombed-out apothecaries and did his developing in a helmet. He then hid the film. These photos were important because they brought to us at home the harshness, the cruelness and the evilness of war.

We have several Vacarro photographs in the museum and one of a German soldier is very famous. The soldier finds, in the heat of battle, his home that has been shattered, and it's a silhouette of the soldier sitting on the foundation, grieving over his home and his family. Karen and I were fortunate to be able to meet Tony, who lives in Brooklyn. Tony's camera –"the thing speaks for itself"—is a mess with broken parts but still in working condition. The sale of that one camera to Tony is an uncelebrated aspect of the impact Argus had on the war effort.

One other thing that happened in 1944 was the founding of University Microfilms by Gene Power who later became a Regent of the University of Michigan and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. Power had been in an accident in 1944 and had been confined to a hospital bed that forced him to look at the ceiling. This 'eureka' moment led to the development of a ceiling projector. Argus manufactured it, and the Lions Clubs throughout the U.S. gave them away so that soldiers and polio victims trapped in iron lungs could read books on the ceiling. University Microfilms gave one of these early projectors to the Museum.

Argus got a jump on the competition by getting lucrative multimillion-dollar government contracts before the war ended to manufacture C-3s for base exchanges in the country. As a result, they got priority on materials and were off and running when the war ended. Retooling after a war to peacetime production is always difficult and Argus weathered this well and was very lucky.

Argus made many more camera accessories and I'll just name a few: attachments for copy work, microscope adapters, light meters, filters, telephoto lenses, film under the Argus name, developing and darkroom supplies, screens, and slide making equipment.

In 1950, there was another name change to Argus Cameras, Inc. They made many more cameras and the Argus C-4, manufactured from 1950-57, was one of them (Joe held up a C-4 and also an oversize version of the C-4 to demonstrate how the company worked the bugs out of its new models). The A-4 (1943-1956) here is one of our prize artifacts: the price of $39.95 is still on this complete set still in its original box with the original instructions.

The C-3 kept going and the company in 1954 had $22 million in sales and assets of about $9 million (compare to Kodak's assets of $500 million). But, there is a cloud on the horizon: foreign competition and labor costs eventually killed the company. They didn't have the ability in the 1960s to have robotics to come in and cut labor costs. Sylvania bought the company in 1959 and they couldn't make it work. They transferred ownership to Mansfield Industries and they couldn't make it work so Sylvania repurchased it. It was one problem after another. They wanted to create a new projector and were unlucky in doing it the same year Kodak came out with the Carousel and Sawyer came out with their new projector. They decided to go into the movie camera business and built a new plant in South Carolina where labor costs were lower. Guess what Kodak did that year? It released Super 8 film!

In 1963, Argus sold the buildings to U of M and in 1967 Sylvania resumed control of the optics portion and moved the company to S. State Street in Ann Arbor. In 1968 and in 1969 there were losses of $2.5 million. In 1969 a major portion of stock was sold to Michele (pronounced Michael) Sindona.

In an article in **The Ann Arbor Observer** of October 1982, John Hilton

noted that the... "company eventually passed into the hands of a promoter who made Charlie Verschoor look like a model of prudence. In 1969, a major stockholder sold his interests in the company to Italian banker Michele Sindona. In less that 20 years, Sindona had gone from driving a truck in Sicily to controlling hundreds of companies in Europe and America, though how he had done so is not entirely clear. Through Argus, Sindona's representatives bought a Canadian hotel chain, and a New York maker of photographic lighting equipment. Sindona's shaky empire, apparently sustained by "kiting" funds from one entity to another, collapsed spectacularly in 1974. Sindona is currently serving a 25-year prison term for fraud. The charges grew out of the failure of one of the casualties of 1974, the Franklin National Bank of New York, which Sindona had controlled. The case was enlivened by a fake kidnapping which Sindona apparently staged himself with the aid of the US and Italian *Mafiosi* in order to spend time in Italy preparing his defense. (Despite re-appearing with what he claimed was a bullet wound in his leg, Sindona was subsequently convicted of jumping bail, too.)" Thus ended Argus as it was.

Argus still exists in Chicago where George Pearson runs a company called Argus Cameras. George has been here and says that he is the continuation of the Argus Camera. He is no more the continuation of Argus Camera than I am. I've asked him to explain how he can say this but there is no one around to protect the name so he grabbed it and he's using it. The cameras are all made in Japan and Taiwan. So it does continue in production.

"A few more tidbits: when O'Neal Construction purchased 1342 N. Main it came with a gentleman named Sammy Ross, who we tried to evict. He was a race car driver and had been a lathe operator at Argus. He was featured in all the old *Argus Eyes* as a race car driver and has been a wonderful source for us. Also helpful to us has been Grace Girvan, who processed many of our pay requests at Great Lakes Savings and whose father Eddie also worked in the Argus Building. Please notice the fountain outside the entry to the building from the parking lot. It is from the Men's Room of Argus. It's not a urinal—it's a former place to wash your hands, but we use it like a fountain in the summer."

Photo loaned by Harriet Birch

Cecelia Birch with an Argus Slide Projector, 1940.

Joe ended his talk by announcing that they are looking for an addition to their staff of curators (two now are George and Jean O'Neal, no relation). They have many items they would like to display and interpret, and they would like a non-profit to own and manage the collection to ensure its perpetuation and care.

During the question period, former workers talked about working at Argus. One woman remembered making 100 cameras an hour or 900 cameras a day. She worked 9-hour days and ½ days on Saturday and made 40 cents an hour. This was slightly better than the pay at King-Seeley.

New Item On Display From Our Collections

A large and gorgeous linen press has been brought out of storage and put on display in our front parlor. It probably dates to the 1870s. It's nice when our beautiful objects can also be useful and its shelves will soon be full of items for sale or on display. Come by and visit and see it soon. Many thanks to Don Cleveland, Russell Ferguson, Ralph Beebe and Judy Chrisman for helping move and set up this lovely antique.

Collections Chair Judy Chrisman reports the acquisition of a framed lace collection done by Mary Collins Johns Ives of Ypsilanti. It was donated by the Ann Arbor Hands on Museum.

Betty Bernard has donated books on Old Dexter, Old Chelsea, a 1923 Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce publication, a history of Ann Arbor by Marwil and a 1937 Michigan Centennial publication. Susan Wineberg donated an autographed photo of President Angell, two copper plates sold at the India Art Shop, a plate celebrating the history of the AME Church and post cards of Ann Arbor. Also donated were a number of Ann Arbor Bank coin changers from the Midway by Sister Kate Ross. Thank you one and all for your generosity.

Slate Chosen For May Elections

We are lucky that all of our officers have agreed to serve another term. The following people are proposed for the slate for our elections at our Annual Meeting May 17th: **Pauline Walters**, President; **Susan Wineberg**, Immediate Past President and Newsletter Editor; **Virginia Hills**, Vice-President; **Patricia Creal**, Treasurer; **Judith Chrisman**, Recording Secretary; and **Harriet A. Birch**, Corresponding Secretary.

Also up for election are four director positions. **Ann DeFreytas** has agreed to run to replace retiring Bylaws Coordinator **Lucille Fisher; Peggy Haines, Jay Snyder and Karen Simpson** have all agreed to stay on the board for another three-year term.

In addition, **Julie Creal Goodridge** has agreed to replace Lisa Black whose termed expired in 2002. And **Tom Freeman** has agreed to an appointment as a Director-at-Large.

Louisa Pieper has again agreed to be our Program Coordinator, an unelected position. Louisa deserves special thanks for doing an outstanding job with the program this year. The huge crowds are a testimony to her skill at finding topics of interest to residents of the county.

Sally Silvennoinen will continue to be our Education Chair in charge of the Loan Boxes and the What's It? Game. This is also an unelected position. Thank you Sally for all of your hard work with the public school children of Washtenaw County.

Another Sad Announcement

We regret to announce the death of another member and supporter Reeva Cranor. Reeva died February 28 at the age of 94. She had been long-time supporter of the Museum and not only crocheted snowflakes for our gift shop but also beaded a T-shirt which we auctioned at the Bob Lyons' Fund Raiser many years ago. Reeva also volunteered with the Friends of the Library. She will be sorely missed by us and her many friends in Ann Arbor.

Tour To Midland Now With Bus

Due to liability problems with uninsured van drivers, we will be hiring a bus for our Midland Tour on June 3rd. The Tour is still limited to 30 people (this is because of constraints at the sites we will visit) and the cost will now be $50.00. We will be visiting the Alden Dow Home and Studio for a tour and box lunch and the home of his parents Herbert and Grace Dow. We will also be able to tour the Dow Gardens. Please send in your reservation cards as soon as possible before the bus is full!

New Church History Out

Archivists inform us that a new publication, Compiled Membership of the **First Presbyterian Church 1826-1941**, is available for purchase. The book is hardbound and costs $40.00 plus $5.00 for shipping. This will be a very useful tool for those doing genealogy of the area. It includes baptisms, marriages, deaths and dismissions. Over 7,000 names are included. To order, either contact the church by calling 734-662-4466 or e-mail them at LABKIT@ aol.com.

20th Annual Preservation Conference

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network announces its 20th conference on **"Lasting Value: Preservation Moves into the 21st Century."** It will be held May 4-6 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan. On Thursday, the Construction Trades Symposium provides live demonstrations by craftspeople of historic construction techniques. Richard Guy Wilson, an architectural historian from the University of Virginia, will be the keynote speaker on Friday at lunch. The Annual Preservation Awards ceremony will be held at the Beaux-Arts style Grand Rapids Art Museum and dinner and silent auction will be in the Ambassador Ballroom of the hotel. Registration for the conference is $300 but daily fees are also available. Call 248-625-8181 for more information.

WCHS Program Schedule

Mark your Calendars for our future programs. All programs are on the third Sunday of the month from 2-4 PM and are free and open to the public. Refreshments are usually served. All members receive a post card reminder of the event with instructions on how to reach the site of the lecture.

Sunday April 16, 2000

Grace Shackman, local writer and historian, will lecture on Michigan architect **Alden Dow in Ann Arbor**. Though best known for his work in Midland, Dow had a strong connection to Ann Arbor through friends and clients including his sister Margaret Dow and her husband Harry Towsley. Shackman's slide tour of Dow's local work will be shown in the comfort of the new auditorium at one of his later works—Greenhills School.

Wednesday May 17, 2000

Annual Meeting and Potluck will be held at the Chelsea Depot at 6:00 PM. We will hear about the **History of the Chelsea Milling Company** by **Howard S. "Howdy" Holmes** after stuffing ourselves with the usual feast. Holmes will tell us about the famous Jiffy Mix Company his father founded in Chelsea.

Saturday

June 3, 2000

A **bus trip to Midland, Michigan** will leave at 9 a.m. and return at 6 p.m. The cost will be $50/person and there will be a limit of 30 people. We will tour the **Alden Dow Home and Studio** and enjoy a box lunch in the living room of this lovely home. We will visit the home of his parents, **Herbert and Grace Dow**, which is next door. We end the day with a stroll through the beautiful **Dow Gardens**.

APRIL SPONSORS

This month's sponsors are:

DETROIT EDISON and ERIM

Around The County

The **Saline Area Historical Society** will feature Cathy Andrews who will speak on furniture styles, with information on how to identify genuine antiques. The meeting is at the Depot Museum, 402 N. Ann Arbor Street, at 7:30 on Wednesday **April 19th**. Cathy will talk on how to recognize fakes and also find gems among the trash at yard sales. The Depot is open for tours every Saturday except holiday weekends until the end of April. Call 769-2219 for more information.

Saline's 20th century **Rentschler Farm** at 1265 E. Michigan Ave will re-open for the summer season on Saturday **May 6** from 11-4. Visitors may park in the Ford lot just west of the farm. The farm will be open every Saturday after that except holiday weekends. See traditional crafts, music, animals and a Queen Anne farmhouse. This is free!

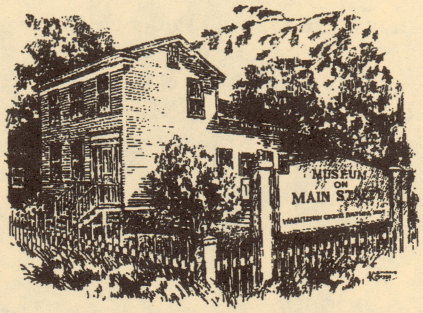
A concert to benefit the Rentschler Farm will be presented by the internationally known Saline Fiddlers on Saturday, May 13th, at 7:30 at the Saline High School, 7190 N. Maple Road. The cost is $10.00 at the door. For information call 429-9621.

The **Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County** will next meet on Sunday **April 30th**. The speaker will be Kathleen LaBudie-Szakall who will talk on using City Directories and Gazeteers in research. Kathleen is a former editor of DSGR Magazine. The class afterward will be done by member Nancy van Blaricum who will tell of the genealogical holdings at the Dexter Historical Society Museum. The meeting will be in Lecture Hall #1, Liberal Arts and Science Bldg, Washtenaw Community College at 1:30 PM. Call 769-5452.

The **Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation** reports that the Annual Marker Awards Banquet will be held **May 24th** at the Ladies Literary Club. Awards are given to homeowners who have improved their properties. This is their "social event of the season" and coincides with Preservation Week. Their board member Bill Nickels reported that RM Classics, an antique automobile dealer on West Forest in Ypsilanti, sold 40 cars at an auction in Phoenix in January, two of them for more than $1million each. He also noted that celebrities including Jerry Seinfeld, Tim Allen and Reggie Jackson attended the auction. Way to go Ypsilanti!

Next Program

Grace Shackman, local writer and historian, will lecture on Michigan architect **Alden Dow** and his work in Ann Arbor. Dow's buildings can be found through our town, despite Dow's association with Midland (would you believe ISR and City Hall to name a few?) The talk will be in one of Dow's newest buildings: Greenhills School. Post cards will be mailed with directions.



WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

MICHIGAN ARCHITECT ALDEN DOW

SPEAKER GRACE SHACKMAN

2 PM • SUNDAY APRIL 16, 2000

GREENHILLS SCHOOL ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

Non-Profit Org.
Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 96
Ann Arbor, MI

NANCY KROHN
905 ROBIN RD
ANN ARBOR MI 48103-3008